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# Angry reactions to Primal Rage - Video has footage that some find distasteful

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*By Toni Marshall March 19, 1996 Publication: The Washington Times Page: C8 Word Count: 1098*

Don't look for Sega Genesis' Primal Rage at Best Buy. Don't look for it in J.C. Penney's spring catalog, either. And in Arizona, you can't find it in Target, Toys R Us or Circuit City - those retailers have pulled it from all their stores in that state

Why?

Because while thousands of youngsters think it's just a game about dinosaurs fighting to save the world, one mom thinks otherwise.

In fact, Ellie Rovella of Gilbert, Ariz., was appalled to learn the game has blood-splattered dinosaurs and apes mutilating dinosaurs, not to mention scenes of the victors urinating on the vanquished.

The game is produced by Time Warner Interactive.

She says she called Time Warner, but got nowhere.

Tracy Egan, public relations director at TWI, says Mrs. Rovella never came to the company. She says the firm has had no contact with her and only learned there was a dispute through inquiries from jour-nalists.

"Our policy is to give as much information to the consumer as possible," she says. "If a consumer is not pleased, then we give them their money back. From what I understand, the store gave Mrs. Rovella an exchange for the tape."

Miss Egan says the urinating action, which is referred to as a hidden move, comes directly from the arcade version of the game. The tape is clearly marked with a rating for ages 13 and above, she says.

After striking out with TWI, Mrs. Rovella talked to her state legislators, but got nowhere. So she called stores herself and got action.

Carolyn Brookter, a spokeswoman for Minneapolis-based Target, which has two area stores, in Woodbridge and Fredericksburg, Va., says the company has not made a final decision to pull the game from all stores.

"If we do pull the game, it would be from the standpoint of its performance," Miss Brookter says. "People aren't buying it. It hasn't sold that well in our stores."

J.C. Penney has discontinued the item in its spring catalog. "It is clearly inconsistent with anything the J.C. Penney stores stand for," says Stephanie Brown, a spokeswoman for the 1,280-store nationwide chain, which sells 350 million catalogs annually. "It was brought to our attention certain characters in the game perform inappropriate acts."

Laurie Bower of Best Buy says she received a call from Mrs. Rovella two weeks ago. "We contacted our marketing department, which was unaware of the moves," she says. "When we found the moves questionable, we decided not to wait to pull the game."

Best Buy has not returned the game but is holding it to sell only if the rating is updated from a "T" (teen) for those 13 to 17 to an "M" (ages 17 and older).

Keith Morris, a spokesman for Wal-Mart stores, says there has been no decision on the company's part to remove the game from the shelves.

"Mrs. Rovella's concerns did not fall on deaf ears. It was taken to heart," he says. "But her views were not representative of all our customers' concerns. We appreciate her concern, which is the whole purpose of a rating system."

The Waldorf, Md., and Fairfax Wal-Mart stores carry the video game.

"We are entertainment pro-viders," says Lee McEnany, group director of corporate communications at Sega Genesis. "It is our policy not to limit the product or censor the product. We feel comfortable with the rating system."

Sega keeps the video games exactly like the arcade version.

The organization that rated Primal Rage, the Entertainment Software Ratings Board, which is part of the Interactive Digital Software Association, says it stands behind the game's rating.

"To my knowledge, we have never changed a rating," says Arthur Pober, spokesman for the board.

"There is a descriptor which tells the underlying theme. That, coupled with the rating, gives the information to the consumer."

He describes the urinating scene as "passive footage," a "2 1/3-second finishing move that doesn't show frontal nudity or sexual behavior."

Each product is evaluated by a rating trio, with each member of the trio viewing products independently. It takes a two-out-of-three consensus to give a rating.

"The rating board doesn't censor," he says. "It is up to the individual to decide whether or not they want the game."

"It's important that parents monitor their children's choices," he says.

Cultural activist C. Delores Tucker, head of the National Political Congress of Black Women, says she applauds the stores that shelved the video games.

"This is a perfect example of what one person can do," she says. "It shows the power of wee power."

Rakel Davis, 12, of Silver Spring, is playing her favorite game at Time Out arcade in City Place Mall in Silver Spring. She says she likes Primal Rage because of the dinosaurs. "That's

why most kids like it," she says.

It's time for her second game. Her player is Chaos, the ape who urinates - that's the finishing move. Her player loses.

The game debuted on the video-game scene during the summer of 1994 and retails for \$39.98. Sega came out with several versions of Primal Rage for home play on Aug. 25. So far it has sold more than 1.5 million copies of the game. The Nintendo version does not have the voiding action.

\*\*\*\*\* Urthshaking carnage! Select one of seven ferocious dinosaurs, then pound your opponents into submission as you battle for Urth Domination. Blizzard's "freeze breath" and "ice geyser" fighting moves stop you cold just before his mega punch hammers you senseless. ... Chaos dazes you with an abundant supply of "power puke," "farts of fury," and "flying butt slams," . . . Armadon's "gut gouger" and "gut fling," Sauron's "cranium crusher," Talon's "face ripper" and "shredding" . . . every original arcade fighting and fatality move is at your fingertips! Get ready to Rage!

This is the promotional label on Primal Rage by Super Nintendo Entertainment System, sold by Time Warner Interactive.

#### \*\*\*PHOTOS (COLOR) CAPTIONS

A&B): Left: Ashlea Brown (right) and Jenee Gholston play Primal Rage at the Time Out video arcade in the City Place Mall on Colesville Road. Right: The game features fierce action among dinosaurs and apes and a questionable "finishing move." Some stores have pulled the video, but it is popular in arcades. The Entertainment Software Ratings Board gave Primal Rage a rating of "T" (for those 13 and older). Those who found certain scenes offensive are hoping public outcry will pressure the board to change the rating to an "M" (mature rating) for persons 17 years and older. Sega Genesis says it does not "limit the product or censor the product" and feels comfortable with the rating system

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